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ADDRESS GIVEN BY M. H. EL FARRA, MEMBER OF THE SIRIAN DELEGATION TO THE
UNITED NATIONS, AT THE 1953 SUMMER INSTITUTE ON AFRICA, ON FRIDAY EVENING,
JULY 31, 1953, AT LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, LINCOLN UNIVERSITY, PA.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honored to be with you tonight. It is also a privilege to have a distinguished French Delegate with us in this discussion. (NOTE: French Delegate, Gabriel Van Laetham, Cultural Attache, French Embassy, was unable to attend the Institute). I believe discussion of such international problem in national and international organization is one of the essential elements for world understanding, cooperation, peace, and security. It is the machinery for peace and harmony among mankind. I think it was with this purpose in mind that the United Nations Organization was created. And with this same purpose in mind that the Asian Arab group presented the North African question before the United Nations Organization. Those thirteen Arab Asian nations raised the matter in the United Nations in order to find a just and honorable solution in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter. However, France which was a leading power in the creation of the United Nations refused to participate or take any part in the United Nations debates and deliberations. And in spite of the fact that the United Nations Organization found that it had jurisdiction to hear the North African Question, France insisted on its refusal to abide by any recommendation of the United Nations, thus creating a very dangerous precedent, a precedent which endangers the very existence of the United Nations Organization. Various appeals were made to France to reconsider its decision but those appeals were of no result. When the United Nations by two thirds majority, appealed to France to conduct her relations and settle her dispute in North Africa in accordance with the

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Charter, the said appeal was never heeded to or accepted by France. On the contrary France openly stated that it will never adhere to any recommendation taken by the United Nations Organization. When the said recommendation was served on France her answer was a blunt refusal. Thus taking an attitude which gave rise to more crisis in North Africa which are more and more aggravated.

Now having discussed this strange attitude of France one may wonder why is France so worried about having the North African problem debated before the United Nations? Why is France insisting on denying competence of the United Nations? Why did not the French Delegate participate in the United Nations debates?

The answer to all these questions, my friends is very simple. France knows that she had no right whatsoever in Tunis and Morocco. She has no right to stay in other peoples country against their will and without their consent. France also knows that world opinion would by no means justify her attitude in North Africa.

The Arab peoples are greatly concerned about North Africa not only because they have culture, history, language, race, and geography in common, but because they believe that liberty is the God given right for which every body is entitled without discrimination.

In Asia and Africa, more than 600 million people have realized their hard-won liberty in the last decade. The mighty movement of awakening and liberation is irresistibly marching on. In Asia, some Imperial countries came to understand that the time of imperialism and colonialism was over. This understanding came in time and thus bloodshed was avoided.

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Lately, you heard much about the problem of North ~~Africa~~ ~~SECRET INFORMATION~~ been repeatedly discussed in the United Nations. It will be again discussed in this coming 8th session of the United Nations General Assembly. You heard a lot about the many victims who were murdered in North Africa for no reason other than asking for their independence and liberty. For no reason other than the very same reason for which you, Americans, fought your war of Independence.

Let me present to you at this stage a short summary of the problem of North Africa.

French penetration in North Africa started early in the 19th century in the time of colonial expansion.

Algeria was invaded by the French in 1830 and was annexed after a long and bloody struggle in 1880. It is now considered a French province. The French established Algerian governor, who is advised by an Assembly of 120 deputies, with 60 seats for a million foreign French citizens and 60 seats for nine million Algerians. Thus the majority in this Assembly is French. This Assembly has been in existence since 1947. With this power in her hand, France aimed at its apparent goal of killing the Arabic culture and language. The French in 1938, ignoring their own statue of Algeria, passed an edict ~~which~~ ^{This would be} ^{any is supplied for the possible interest of} ^{your analysis} ^{not warrant dissemi-} ^{nation by} "Choutain Decisions" which reads:

"Arabic is considered to be a foreign language".

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When teachers of Arab schools have not had a certified knowledge of the French language, the schools have been closed.

After over a century of French colonization only 10% of the Algerian children are provided with schools. This figure was taken from the report of the French Minister of Education issued after the last war.

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On the other hand, as a sequence to the conquest of Algeria France invaded Tunisia in 1881. Ostensibly this invasion was undertaken by France to protect the frontiers of Algeria from depredation of lawless tribes, but it was a premeditated attempt to bring Tunisia under French domination. The same thing happened to Morocco in 1912. It was occupied by the use of force. French Marshal Lyauty himself never denied that they went to Morocco as conquerors. On July 14, 1914 he declared in Casablanca:

"Conquest is not enough. Conquest must be organized. This organization of the conquest began the same day that our troops disembarked at Casablanca. Now today with this conquest definitely established, it is well to examine our conscience..."

He further said:

"We obliged a sultan to accept the protectorate and give his signature against his will. He was so hostile to the whole idea that we obliged to force his abdication."

As a result of this forced invasion, French relations with the two states of Tunis and Morocco were regulated by the treaties of El Bardo and La Marsa, signed with the Bey of Tunis in 1881 and 1883 respectively, and the treaty of Fez, signed in 1912 with the Sultan of Morocco. These treaties were imposed by force of arms and were born in the time of imperial expansion. Legally speaking, all those treaties are null and void, because the contracting parties were not of equal status, but one, Tunis and Morocco, inferior to the other, France. However, a significant feature of those instruments, which transformed Tunisia and Morocco into protectorates, was that they were concluded between two sovereign states. Although the protectorates gave France the exercise of some of the attributes of Tunisian and Moroccan sovereignty, it did not affect their legal status under the international law. The separate statehood of both Tunisia and Morocco was expressly recognized in the treaties. Today Tunis

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and Morocco are claiming their rights and asking for the restoration of their political independence, which was guaranteed by the protectorate treaties.

As a result of this armed invasion, France sought domination in every field of North African life. A policy of peopling the country with French settlers for political and economical advantages was adopted. The result was the growth of a French Colony sustained by grants of land and concessions of various kinds - all at the expense of the North African people.

By various methods and legislative means the best lands in Tunis and Morocco passed into the hands of French colonists. A typical example of the method employed was illustrated in the matter of the so-called "juridical forests" in Tunis. Thousands of acres of cultivable land passed into the hands of the State. Once this operation was completed, a second law reclassified the "forests" as agricultural land, and it was put back into circulation for the benefit of the French colonists.

As regards public finance, it is only necessary to glance through the budget for the last 20 years to see how state expenditure in Tunis and Morocco has continuously grown to maintain the army officials required to uphold French administration of Tunisia and Morocco. Its cost amounts to two thirds of the total budget. In Tunisia for example, of the 30 thousand public officials in Tunisia (that is to say, one for a little over 100 inhabitants), about three quarters are of French nationality. All the key positions are reserved for Frenchmen; North African officials hold almost without exception only subordinate posts.

This financial and economic policy carried out by the French in the country has channeled the wealth of Tunisia and Morocco into the hands of the

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French settlers. To this must be added that the exploitation of the natural resources of the country such as mines, ports, public utilities, transport, bank, cement works, agricultural estates, and so on, is carried by the great French companies.

Today the French Resident Generals who ought to have been a simple agency of suggestions to the Bey of Tunis and the Sultan of Morocco, have become, through the persistent usurpation of power, the real heads of Tunisian and Moroccan administration. The laws are all drawn up and elaborated by their officials.

Time does not permit to give you a complete picture of the so-called individual liberty which those people of North Africa enjoy under the French rule, but let me quote to you a paragraph from a declaration of a French attorney, Mr. Bonnet, the President of the Bar Association at Casablanca. He said:

"In Morocco there is no legal code, no court of justice, no magistrate, no laws. Rights of defence are non-existent. Individual liberty nil. Abuse of authority uncontrollable."

To this, let me add that in North Africa as a whole there is no freedom of speech, assembly, labor union or travel. Boy scouts, student organizations and political parties are forbidden. The French administration monopolizes the Government and the natural resources. Human beings are considered purely as a commodity. In many cases they cannot move from one town to another in their country, without travel permit. They must explain the purpose of the trip, the place and time of return. All North African leaders are now either in detention camps or in jail or in exile.

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Very often you hear France saying that she had made great improvements in its so-called "civilizing mission". The time does not permit giving you a complete picture of the improvements which were introduced after a century or more of occupation. However, one essential element should not be overlooked or forgotten. The exploitation and development of colonial areas was undertaken primarily in the interest and for the benefit of the colonial power. France built some schools and educated minor percentage of the population, constructed roads and railways, permitted commerce and industry. But had France not benefited from any of that? If the answer were "no" why does France insist in staying in a losing venture? France should give up her so-called "civilizing mission" for which North Africans are no longer grateful. Everybody knows how much North Africans benefited France. Germany had done no harm to them, but they had died on the French battlefield during both wars.

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It is granted, my friends, that France established some schools, constructed roads and railways, exploited mines and built factories, But what progress had France made during the century of her occupation in training North Africans in self-government and in guiding them towards self-determination? Could it be maintained that France with her wide experience in this field was unable to bring the North Africans to a stage where they could resume their internal sovereignty? If after 120 years of occupation in Algeria and 70 years in Tunis and 40 years in Morocco, France still maintains that North Africans are not ready for independence, France would be admitting her failure in this mission. It would also corroborate the French documents which prove that France went to those countries of North Africa for colonial purpose and not for civilizing mission. The Yellow Book "Affaires de Tunisi 187-1881" clearly showed that France had gone to Tunisia only for colonial expansion

and not at all on a "civilizing mission".

The French try to create the impression that independence will bring persecution of minorities. They forget that now there is persecution of a majority of North Africans by a foreign minority of French rulers. Independence will re-establish judicial and moral law and protect the rights of minorities.

France also tries to create the impression that, for fear of communism, the United States should support the French occupation against the aspirations of the Moroccans and Tunisians. Communism is a French importation. The religion of the country sharply conflicts with it. But even then I dare say that France will by letting itself be guided by the interest of a handful of French settlers in North Africa, and by pursuing her present policy of colonialism, will create, as it did in the Far East, circumstances on which communism would breed.

Communist influence in North Africa is very negligible. The North African leaders are outspoken anti-communists who seek no more than their freedom and right of self-determination. They have on many occasions given expression to their friendship and good intention toward free world in general and France in particular. These people believe in democracy. They are opposed to communism and surely every step should be taken not to let them even entertain the thought which a famous living statesman expressed when he said that he would even ally himself with the devil if that would help his country.

After 120 years of occupation in Algeria and 70 years in Tunis and 40 years in Morocco, the North African people are convinced that justice and progress are impossible under foreign domination. This conclusion was a result

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of long experience of colonial dictatorship, social injustice, and daily humiliation. As long as 25 million people are dominated by a foreign minority of a million and a half Europeans, monopolizing power under military protection, democracy, and therefore peace, in North Africa are impossible. Independence, democracy and international cooperation are the surest way to peace and permanent security, in North Africa, as they are in the rest of the world. An aggression of one European nation against another would lead to armed conflict. A German invasion of France is considered a crime, while French invasion of North Africa is shamelessly condoned. North Africans, I believe, are just as interested in protecting their freedom as the French.

Understanding between the French and North Africans is desired, but it is not likely outside of the United Nations. North Africans would like to see established an Algerian Republic and in Tunis and Morocco two constitutional monarchies in the form of the British Government. All look towards membership in the United Nations. The three nations of North Africa are willing to enter into an agreement of friendship with France which also protects interests of French residents. They feel this will open a real period of international cooperation in the place of colonial domination. France and Syria and Lebanon which were until recently under a French Mandate, now happily entertain the best friendly relations and are able to cooperate in many fields of international activity. North Africans are looking forward to the time when they reach that goal.

As the President of the United States said in his speech to the National Conference on International, Economic and Special Development, on

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April 8th, 1952:

"In this country, scientific progress has brought us to the point where mankind, for the first time in human history, can wipe poverty and ignorance and human misery clean off the face of the earth. Yet, this cannot be done unless scientific progress is linked with political freedom. This is the lesson of history."

M. H. El Farra

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